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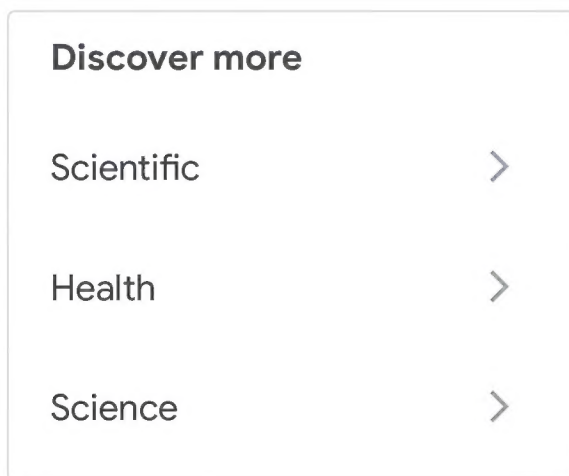
**\*\*Radio Sawa\*\***

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**\*\*Bahrain.. How the Hashtag "Our Trust in Al-Khalifa" Turned into a  
Virtual War Between the Opposition and Loyalists\*\***

**\*Al-Watan — February 5, 2014\***

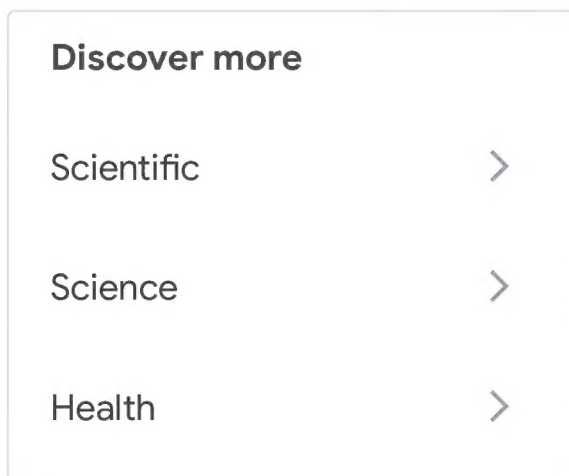
Nearly three years after the outbreak of popular protests in Bahrain coinciding with the Arab Spring, sectarian clashes between government loyalists and opponents shifted from demonstrations and sit-ins on the streets of Manama to social media networks.



The social platform Twitter provided a platform for all voices, both those opposing and those loyal to the monarchy, and political demands transformed into what resembled a war between Shia and Sunni.

Tweeters from both sects waged virtual battles on Twitter, either calling for the overthrow of the regime or expressing loyalty to the King.

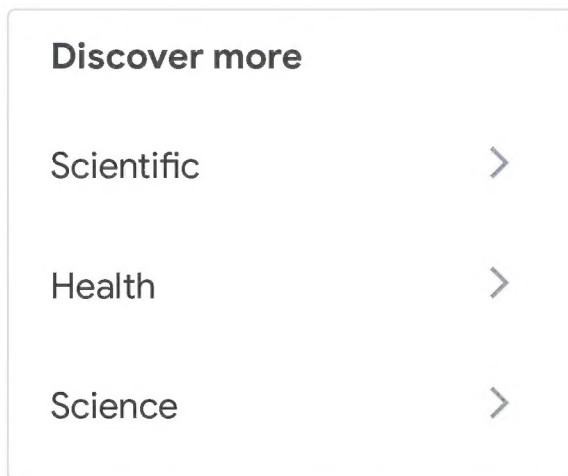
While the hashtag **\*\*#Down\_With\_Hamad\*\*** remained a space for Shia opposition figures, a new hashtag loyal to the ruling family emerged in recent days under the name **\*\*#OurTrustInAlKhalifa\*\***.



The hashtag's creator, Dhafer Al-Zayani, stated that the campaign expresses "our trust in the Al-Khalifa family. We as the Bahraini people place absolute trust in the ruling family," adding to Radio Sawa's website that "trust has one meaning: the people's trust in their leadership."

On the other hand, one tweeter (Arin Al-Mustad'afin) accused him of "flattering the ruling family and attempting to whitewash its violations against the Shia majority."

He told Radio Sawa's website that the hashtag **\*\*#OurTrustInAlKhalifa\*\*** "was launched by a man named Dhafer Al-Zayani, a loyalist to the core of the regime."



He added that the hashtag "does not reflect the wishes of the Bahraini street, which is struggling to achieve justice, equality, and democracy, and does not agree with the dictatorship of the ruling regime."

However, Al-Zayani insists that "the hashtag is the voice of the people to the world, showing that the bond between the people and their leadership is like the bond between the soul and the body," noting that the proof of his words is "the success the hashtag achieved, reaching **\*\*51st place among the most widely circulated hashtags in the world\*\***."

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### **\*\*Source\*\***

### **\*\*AI Analysis\*\***

The article discusses the **\*\*virtual war\*\*** on **\*\*Twitter\*\*** between Bahraini regime loyalists and opponents, within the context of the transformations Bahrain witnessed following the **\*\*popular protests\*\*** of 2011, which coincided with the **\*\*Arab Spring\*\***. The article sheds light on the **\*\*hashtags\*\*** used by both sides, including the hashtag **\*\*"Our Trust in Al-Khalifa"\*\*, launched by **\*\*Dhafer Hamad Al-Zayani\*\***, which signified support for the ruling family.**

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### **\*\*Key Points in the Article:\*\***

#### **\*\*1. Hashtags and Trends on Twitter:\*\***

- **\*\*#Down\_With\_Hamad\*\*** was a prominent hashtag used by opponents calling for the overthrow of the Bahraini regime.

Meanwhile, **\*\*#OurTrustInAlKhalifa\*\*** emerged from state loyalists as an affirmation of allegiance to the ruling family.

## **\*\*2. Contrasting Views on Dhafer Al-Zayani:\*\***

- **\*\*Zafir Al-Zayani\*\*** was one of the figures active in supporting the regime through this campaign, affirming that it expresses "the people's trust in their leadership."
- On the other hand, some accused him of flattering the regime and offering defenses of alleged violations against Shia citizens.

## **\*\*3. The Hashtag's Global Success:\*\***

- Despite the accusations, Al-Zayani pointed out that the hashtag gained great popularity, reaching **\*\*51st place among the most widely circulated hashtags globally\*\***, demonstrating broad engagement from supporters.

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## **\*\*The Topic in a Broader Context:\*\***

### **\*\*1. The Role of Social Media in the Conflict:\*\***

- Following the outbreak of protests, **\*\*Twitter\*\*** and **\*\*Facebook\*\*** became primary platforms for exchanging political opinions, organizing demonstrations, and participating in protest movements.



The **hashtag** became an effective tool for expressing political views, from both supporters and opponents.

- **Hashtags that emerged in Bahrain:**

- **#Down\_With\_Hamad:** Expressed a call to overthrow the Bahraini regime amid the protests. Used by opponents demanding radical political change.
- **#OurTrustInAlKhalifa:** Launched by **Dhafer Al-Zayani** to express loyalty to the Bahraini regime. It was considered a response to opposition hashtags such as #Down\_With\_Hamad.

**2. Dhafer Hamad Al-Zayani:**

- **Zafir Hamad Al-Zayani** is one of the pro-regime activists with a prominent online presence through **forums** and **social media platforms**. As previously mentioned, he used the **pseudonym** "Asad Tikrit" to defend **Sunni** causes in Bahrain and respond to **opponents**.

- **His Positions:** Al-Zayani was known for his strong stances against **Iranian expansion** in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf, as well as his strong support for the ruling family. In many of his statements, he emphasized that **loyalty to the leadership** is one of the foundations of **Bahrain's stability**. He also believed in the importance of **national unity** among all segments of the Bahraini people.

- **Threats and Harassment:** Like many pro-government figures in Bahrain, **Al-Zayani** was exposed to threats and harassment from opponents, both online and in reality. He was also subjected to certain

incidents, such as **vandalism of his car** and death threats, as he referenced in some videos.

### **3. Virtual Wars and Sectarian Differences:**

- These electronic campaigns can be described as **virtual wars** between **loyalists and opponents** in Bahrain. The **Shia sect** represented the larger wing of the opposition, while the **Sunni sect** tended more toward supporting the regime.

- **Hashtags** became an **electronic battlefield** where each side used social media to mobilize the masses, either by calling for **political change** or **defending the ruling regime**. In these electronic wars, **ideas and beliefs** can be more influential than traditional battles in the streets.

### **4. The Impact of This Virtual War:**

- **Deepening Sectarian Division:** Sectarian division in Bahrain escalated across social networks, as cyberspace became a new arena for competition between **Shia and Sunni**.

- **Political Impact:** Through these campaigns, **public opinion** may influence the ruling regime and its domestic and foreign policy orientations.

- **International Impact:** Due to international media attention on events in Bahrain, there became **international scrutiny** of how **social media** was being used to influence public opinion. Electronic campaigns became an important source for influencing the **international community's** understanding of the conflict in Bahrain.



## **\*\*5. Future Implications:\*\***

- **\*\*Digital Maturity:\*\*** Awareness is growing among people in Bahrain and the region about how to use **\*\*social networks\*\*** as an effective tool for political influence.
- **\*\*Censorship and Limits:\*\*** Conversely, governments may move toward imposing **\*\*internet censorship\*\***, limiting freedom of expression.

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## **\*\*Conclusion:\*\***

What we witness in Bahrain of **\*\*electronic wars\*\*** between loyalists and opponents of the Bahraini regime is not a new phenomenon. It reflects the **\*\*great influence\*\*** that **\*\*social media\*\*** has come to hold in political life and in shaping public opinion. Despite the **\*\*risks and challenges\*\*** that activists may face — whether opponents or supporters — the **\*\*digital battle\*\*** remains one of the most prominent forms of **\*\*political struggle\*\*** in the modern era.

**\*To be continued... 7\***

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I affirm at the outset that I have no personal dispute, enmity, or hatred toward our esteemed Shia brothers as individuals; rather, my strong objection stems from the core of my faith, which is shared by all of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah — a red line that accepts no transgression.

Targeting our Islamic symbols, foremost among them the honor of the Messenger of God ﷺ, his pure wives the Mothers of the Believers, and his noble Companions, may God be pleased with them all, is an act we cannot accept or overlook, nor can it be considered a point of view — it is a violation of our sanctities. As for sectarian rituals or private denominational practices beyond that, we do not interfere in

them, for they are the concern of their adherents, as is the case with various beliefs around the world, as long as they do not become a tool to undermine our sanctities or a means to breach our security and national identity.

**\*\*Dhafer Hamad Al-Zayani\*\***

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